

DEPARTMENT OF STATE WEATHER PROGRAMS

The Department of State (DOS) plays an active role in international climate/meteorological policy making as a result of the growing worldwide concern with global environmental issues, including the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer and global warming. The role of DOS has principally revolved around preparation and negotiation of the United States position in three fora: (1) the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, (2) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); and (3) negotiation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Stratospheric ozone depletion has been recognized as a critical health and environmental problem for more than a decade. Under DOS leadership, the United States worked to negotiate international agreements to phase-out ozone-depleting substances, which should lead to a recovery of the ozone layer in the next century. To date, these treaties have been signed and ratified by more than 130 countries (including the United States), representing 99 percent of the world's production of ozone depleting substances.

The IPCC, which is jointly sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), held its first session in 1988. This organization serves as a government forum to assess the state of scientific, technical, and economic information regarding climate change. The IPCC is currently organized in three working groups, examining: (1) the

state of the science; (2) impacts and possible response strategies, including mitigation and adaptation; and (3) economics and other cross-cutting issues. The IPCC released its first assessment report in 1990; supplementary reports were released in 1992 and 1994. A full second assessment report from each of the working groups was scheduled for publication in late 1995.

The Framework Convention on Climate Change was negotiated beginning February 1991; the convention was open for signature in Rio de Janeiro at the Earth Summit in June 1992. As of April 1995, it had been ratified by 129 countries, including the United States. The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was held in Berlin in March/April 1995. The convention calls for all countries to develop inventories of their emissions and sinks of greenhouse gases and calls upon developed countries to aim to return these

emissions to their 1990 levels by the year 2000. At its first session, the conference decided to begin negotiations on next steps under the convention to elaborate policies and measures and to set quantified limitation and reduction objectives for greenhouse gases.

In addition to its primary role in the fora listed above, DOS is active on the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) of the National Science and Technology Council. The CENR was established in 1993 to coordinate scientific domestic programs. Furthermore, while the emphasis on global environmental issues is a key new component of the department's focus, traditional DOS responsibilities, described in earlier federal plans, continue. These include, but are not limited to, international aspects of food policy, disaster warnings and assistance, WMO and UNEP activities, and international meteorological programs.